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20 tips, tricks and tools to level up your estate planning game
By Tobias Salinger
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Financial advisors and tax professionals likely work with many wealthy clients, though none of those customers is likely to have an estate the size of Warren Buffett's. Nevertheless, his strategies may carry applicable lessons for their estate planning.

In June, the longtime Berkshire Hathaway CEO revered as the "oracle of Omaha" announced that he will donate $6 billion in the company's stock to five foundations — which means that Buffett has now allotted 99.5% of his giant estate to philanthropic organizations. Beyond those impressive figures, Buffett's typically savvy move offers a helpful reminder to tax planners and their clients on why it's beneficial to donate stock rather than liquidating the holdings prior to contributing cash to charity, said Miklos Ringbauer, founder of Los Angeles-based MiklosCPA.

"If he sells the shares, his basis is probably super low. He will have to pay capital gains tax," Ringbauer said. "I tell my clients, if you have appreciated stock, don't sell it. Gift it."

That way, they get the charitable deduction based on the value of the stock and avoid netting capital gains as they steer assets to the nonprofit organization of their choice.

Most advisors likely already know that strategy well. The stories below could present much more novel ideas about estate planning for their clients, as well as technology tools for their businesses.

Scroll down the slideshow for a roundup with links with further information about estate planning strategies and practice management and professional development resources for financial advisors. And click here for all of Financial Planning's estate planning coverage for financial advisors and tax professionals.

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Bulk up on continuing education in sunny Arizona
A new addition to the advisor conference agenda could prove to be a profitable and pleasant getaway in January.

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Tech tools for estate planning
An estate planning software firm aims to aid advisors in the complex calculations and data management aspects of the process.

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Other fintech innovations and challenges
An array of fintech competitors are vying to help advisors with estate planning.

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An investment strategy that could help some estates' plans
The name of this investment vehicle brings a headache to the uninitiated, alongside potential savings on taxes.

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Try these irrevocable trusts
These trust entities could avoid the dilemmas posed by potential changes to estate taxes.

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Consider a charitable remainder trust
Charitable remainder trusts (CRTs), charitable remainder annuity trusts (CRATs), charitable remainder unitrusts (CRUTs) or net income charitable remainder unitrusts (NICRUTs) could fit into clients' estate plans.

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The sales pitch and risks of life insurance
It may be the most frequent sales idea in the history of financial services, but life insurance can still play a valuable role in estate planning.

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Estate planning is organic growth in some ways
Many advisory practices seek to be multigenerational, but not all of them succeed in attracting clients' children to stay on as customers.

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Invite and engage spouses
Basic demographics dictate that the industry must either speak to both partners in a couple or sustain a loss of business after the death of one spouse.

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Family dynamics are dynamic
These four steps to successful estate plans give advisors the means to open the lines of communication for complicated families.

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Wills for legacy, not just financial assets
A family story is as valuable as a great estate plan … depending on the size of the estate in question, of course.

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Conflict resolution for financial advisors
A family therapist or counselor usually works better as an analogy for an advisor's work than the typical "financial quarterback" discussed by many planners.

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The estate lawsuit from Margaritaville
Even some of the wealthiest and most successful performers' estates get hit in legal tangles shortly after their deaths.

READ MORE: Jimmy Buffett's widow sues to remove trustee of $275 million

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Kids' jobs build character, savings and estate plans
Business owner clients can reap tax savings and avoid estate taxes by employing their children.

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Estate planning is a form of succession planning
This firm's succession offers a model to other RIAs seeking to be multigenerational with its base of advisors and clients.

READ MORE: How this RIA jumped two succession hurdles at once

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An often overlooked threat to estate plans
Statistically speaking, diminished capacity and elder fraud likely affect many more estate plans than any tax hit.

READ MORE: How to plan ahead for diminished capacity and prevent elder abuse

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Narrowing the racial will gap
Every estate plan protects one family's wealth for the next generation, and that compounds over time.

READ MORE: Fighting systemic racism with estate planning — one client at a time

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Estate planning for LGBTQ clients
LGBTQ clients can use these methods to take their estates into their own hands, regardless of any Supreme Court ruling or Washington politics.

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Tax is just one aspect

The share of estates subject to a federal estate tax is remarkably small, so most of them must address many other issues besides possible payments to Uncle Sam.

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Free estate planning perks for customers
The value is much greater than a giveaway T-shirt or tote.

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